General Audiences

No Archive Warnings Apply

Gen

LEGO Ninjago

Lloyd Garmadon & Kai

Lloyd Garmadon
Kai (Ninjago)
Nya (Ninjago)
Cole (Ninjago)
Jay Walker
Zane (Ninjago)

Touch Starved Lloyd Garmadon
It's just kinda speculated about
Lloyd is touch starved when he gets out of Darkley's and you cannot convince me otherwise
Oh gods how do I tag this
No beta we die like Garmadon
Hugs
A ridiculous amount of hair ruffles
Kai there are other ways to show platonic physical affection
Platonic Relationships
Nya knows what's up
SMOL LLOYD
THE RETURN OF THE GREMLIN CHILD
Come on you know you miss the kid dklfasd
Emotional Hurt/Comfort
Mostly just emotional oof except for that one part where Kai falls down the stairs
he's fine don't worry
HAVE I MENTIONED THERE ARE HUGS?
Also snuggles after a nightmare
Lloyd doesn't know how to ask for things
Darkley's sucks
Not much of Jay or Zane in this one sadly
I miss them :'(Gonna have to write something else just for them lol
This is what it's like to not have a favourite you just wanna write them all all the time
KAI'S A GOOD BIG BROTHER
What the heck are tags
I dunno just read it slkdfmads
Questionable Timeline
Like I know what the heck I'm doing LOL
Don't let Cole near baking appliances
KAI AND LLOYD BROTHERLY BONDING
Platonic Love
is my jam
do not repost to another site
English

An Impromptu Little Brother

Leonardo_Charles_BlueWood_21

Summary:

Kai had been through a lot. He'd learned a lot and seen a lot and changed a lot throughout his time being a ninja. But there was absolutely nothing could have prepared him for the aggravating annoyance that was the ten-year-old son of Lord Garmadon.

or

Kai tries this whole 'being patient' thing, learns a thing or two, and Lloyd gets a big brother.

Notes:

(See the end of the work for notes (#work_endnotes) .)

Kai had never been the most patient person.

Sure, he'd gotten a lot better since becoming a ninja, Sensei Wu's training had taught him the importance of being patient, but he was still far from perfect, and part of him didn't want to be. His ' *hot headedness* ,' as his friends had dubbed it, was part of who he was. He wasn't interested in giving that part of himself up completely, but he did acknowledge that he could work on not taking offence, and letting the small things get to him so much.

That being said: Lloyd Garmadon was hardly a ' *small thing* .'

Yeah, okay, the kid might've been *physically small* , but his pranks and ' *evil schemes'* were anything but, and Kai was 'bout ready to *snap* .

He was a brat, in every sense of the word. He was loud and complained all the time, getting on all of their nerves, and he was annoying even *without* the pranks and occasional tantrums. And, look, Kai could take a lot. He'd been through a lot and dealt with a lot of crap in his life so far, so his limits stretched pretty far. There wasn't a lot he couldn't handle.

But that kid was toeing dangerously close to the line.

He'd had to drag him out of the training room on more than one occasion so that he could train at *all* , since it was near impossible to do so with the kid there trying to sabotage him every three seconds. What was worse was that no matter how many times he banished him from the room, he always came back.

And it was like he was only targeting Kai! He couldn't understand what he'd ever done to the kid to be entitled to his wrath, at least not anything that the others hadn't done as well, which was why it made no sense that the kid was only bothering *him* .

Sure, he would *occasionally* prank the other's, but it was mostly just Kai who was the victim. Nya was somehow miraculously spared, which Kai could not for the life of him understand. She probably spent the most time with the kid out of anyone, and yet she hadn't mentioned any pranks since his first week on the ship with them. Kai had asked her more than once what she possibly could have done to avoid getting jumped by him and she'd just looked at him weird before sighing and turning away like she thought he was being an idiot.

Real helpful, sis, thanks.

Kai forced himself to breathe and stamp down his annoyance and tried to be patient. Nya had researched Darkley's and shared some of it, so they all knew at least a little about what the place had been like. It wasn't like it was *entirely* the kids fault that he was the way he was, the school was literally made to raise villains, (which was something Kai actually

thought they should address and dismantle sooner rather than later.) Lloyd couldn't exactly help himself if pranks and 'evilness' were all he knew.

Or at least that's what Nya kept telling him. Kai was having a difficult time believing it. There was something purposeful about the way he annoyed them all, like it was intentional and he was *trying* to get a reaction out of them.

It was aggravating to think about.

But it was fine, he could be chill; nothing he couldn't handle. It was just one bratty kid, he could deal with it.

Another bucket of cold water on his head and he was dragging Lloyd out of the room by his arm, *fuming* .

"What is your problem?" he snapped once they were outside the training room. "You need to *stop* . You are not in Darkley's anymore so you can't do stuff like this anymore! I swear, if I see one more bucket--" he abruptly became aware of the fact that Lloyd wasn't even listening to him, he was just staring at the spot where Kai's hand was wrapped around his wrist. Kai growled in frustration. "--Oh come *on!* You're not even listening!"

He wondered how long Lloyd had been just tuning him out and ignoring him completely before running away after he'd finished yelling at him. He was getting really, really tired of dealing with the kid and for the hundredth time, entertained the thought of just dumping him off the side of the ship.

He released his wrist, pulling his hand away and opened his mouth to get his attention but the words died in his throat when Lloyd let out an almost broken sound, panickedly grabbing his hand to keep him from withdrawing it.

It seemed that he hadn't meant to do it because a moment later he froze, and his head snapped up to look at Kai, expression akin to that of a deer in headlights. He abruptly released his hand, stepping back and away from him, his shoulders hiking up to his ears as he dropped his eyes to the floor.

Kai stared at him.

"Whatever," Lloyd scoffed, kicking at the wooden floor, his hood had fallen over his face so Kai couldn't see his expression and his fists were clenched, arms held stiffly at his sides. He didn't wait for an answer before he was storming off down the hallway and Kai couldn't do anything but watch him go, mind whirling.

He abruptly felt a stab of regret, and guilt settled in his chest as he reexamined the whole situation. His anger fizzled out, and he realized that he may have been overreacting a little. Grabbing him like that might not have been the best idea, he really didn't know what kind of trauma he'd gone through at Darkley's.

He huffed frustratedly, running his hand through his hair and dropping his head back to stare up at the ceiling.

After a moment he glanced at the hallway that Lloyd had disappeared down, then sighed, his shoulder's sagging, and headed back to the training room.

He didn't have time for this, he had training.

Kai kinda forgot about the incident for a couple of days and things went more or less back to the annoying normal, except…

Well, he found himself paying a bit closer attention to the kid. It wasn't on purpose or anything, but he'd started watching him and how he interacted with the team a bit more and he started noticing things he hadn't before.

He would always stand closest to Nya while they were on the brig and sometimes she would put a hand on his shoulder for a moment and he would look like he'd just succeeded in an evil scheme.

He would purposefully place him in their way when they were walking through the hall so they'd brush past him, or have to bodily pick him up and move him out of the way so they could get through, even though he was small enough to dodge them entirely and there was seemingly no reason for it.

When they were headed out or leaving from somewhere that he'd accompanied them to, he'd throw a tantrum, stubbornly refusing to move until Cole scooped him up and threw him over his shoulder.

That whole scene was normal, but where Kai would ordinarily stop paying attention, he kept watching and noticed that he didn't actually struggle as much as he expected him to while he was in Cole's arms. His brow furrowed at that. His compliance once Cole had picked him up didn't match with the stubborn protests and wailing that had occurred moments before. Sure, he kicked a little, and demanded he unhand him, but it almost looked like it was more for show than anything.

Kai really wasn't sure what to think of any of it.

He'd steal Jay's game controller and cackle as he chased him around the room to get it back, dodging his attempts at grabbing it until he caught him in his arms and pried it out of his grip. Jay would scold him sounding affronted and Lloyd would stick his tongue out before zipping off like he'd gotten exactly what he wanted, which was weird because he literally hadn't gotten anything out of it besides Jay grabbing and then scolding him, not unlike what usually happened with Kai.

The kid really made no sense at all.

Kai mulled it over for a few days, trying to see the correlation between it all.

He watched Nya greet Lloyd when he entered the kitchen one morning, before offering him some pancakes that he declined in favour of stealing Kai's, which made him temporarily forget what he'd been thinking about since all of his attention was taken up trying to get them back.

Nya caught his arm when he passed close enough to keep him from chasing gremlin around any further and he fumed even as she gave him another fresh plate of pancakes, all the while Lloyd was sitting on top of the fridge, munching on his stolen food, looking incredibly pleased with himself.

"Brat," Kai scowled at him as he sat back down at the table.

Lloyd stuck his tongue out at him and Kai felt his face twitch but he turned his attention back to his food, grumbling under his breath.

Kai shot him annoyed looks all through breakfast and Lloyd just continued looking smug. He was so busy glaring at the kid he nearly missed when Zane asked him a question.

He complained about it to Nya later that day, when he'd gone to hide from Lloyd's pranks in the ship's engine room where his sister was doing some repair work.

"I just don't get it," he huffed, glaring at the wall. "Why doesn't he bother the others like this? I can barely get two steps down the hall without walking into a trap!"

Nya just looked at him.

"What?" he demanded.

She sighed, putting down her wrench. "It's because he likes you, Kai."

He stared at her, gaping. “I-- *excuse me?”* he spluttered for a moment, flailing, then folded his arms and scowled. “What part of him *attacking me* makes you think that he *likes me?”*

Nya scrubbed at her face, uncaring of the streaks of grease that ended up on her skin because of the action. “You really haven’t figured it out yet?” she looked up at the ceiling as though asking the first spinjitzu master to strike her down and save her from his idiocy. “You guys are so dense,” she grumbled under her breath.

“Figured out what?” Kai snapped. “There’s nothing to figure out! He’s a brat that likes messing with me for no good reason!”

“It’s the only way he knows how to get your attention.”

Kai opened his mouth but the words died in his throat.

Nya gestured to herself. “I spend time with him, I actually acknowledge him when he comes into the room, he doesn’t have to work to get my attention, and that’s why I don’t get pranked as much.” She paused then added, “Zane too actually. And he’s harder to get a reaction out of, so Lloyd usually leaves him alone.”

Kai stared at her, feeling a little like his feet had been swept out from under him.

“He goes after you so much because he wants to spend time with you and the only way any of you will look at him is if he’s doing something bad,” she frowned a little at that. “Which is exactly what it was like in Darkley’s and the whole reason he was trying to be ‘evil’ in the first place. He’s ten. He just wants attention.”

She stood, looking at him with a soft huff. “He looks up to you Kai, and he wants to spend more time with you. He just doesn’t know how to ask for it without tricking you into it.”

Kai swallowed, feeling horribly off kilter. “That’s…” he really didn’t know how to respond to the revelation.

“Just try spending more time with him and see if that changes anything,” she said, patting him on the shoulder as she walked past him. She exited the room leaving Kai with his thoughts.

It sounded crazy. Lloyd? *Liking him?* Wanting to spend more time with him? All Kai had ever really done was yell at him, why would he ever even want…?

And there was the guilt. He grimaced, shoving his hands into his pockets and leaning back against the wall, letting himself slide down until he was sitting on the warm metal floor.

What a mess.

He didn’t try right away, feeling a little bit skittish at the prospect. Which was kinda stupid. The kid was half his size, he really shouldn’t have been intimidated by him. In any case, he just ended up trying to avoid Lloyd more for a while, ignoring his frowns and Nya’s disapproving looks.

Look, let her be disappointed in him all she wanted, he literally had no idea how he should be reacting to the information that the gremlin who’d been making his life difficult from the moment they’d met him actually just wanted to spend time with him because he looked up to him. You couldn’t just spring that information on someone and expect them to just be chill about it right away, he needed at least a little bit of time to process and figure out exactly what he was going to do about it.

He couldn't just… start paying attention to him, could he? Then the kid might think that his pranks had worked and he'd just keep doing them and Kai would be stuck getting tripped and having cold water poured over his head for the rest of his life.

So no, that wasn't an option.

He could start ignoring him more, but it was ridiculously hard to ignore the person who kept stealing his snacks--and now that he was really thinking about it he could see Nya might actually have been right about the whole ' *trying to get his attention* ' thing. He didn't know how he possibly could have missed it before. It was so obvious.

He was starting to understand why Nya had called him dense.

There was something he didn't quite get though.

Nya had said he just wanted their attention, so why would he keep going once he had it? To try and keep their attention for longer maybe? But that didn't make a lot of sense. They usually went back to ignoring him after Cole had picked him up and started carrying him during one of his tantrums--

Then it hit him.

He thought back to the things that Lloyd did and realized that it wasn't just about the attention. He'd never run faster than they were able to catch him, he'd always stand within arms reach whenever he pranked Kai so that he could grab his arm and pull him out of the room, he wouldn't move until Cole picked him up, Nya would place a hand on his shoulder and he'd grin at her even wider…

She thought that it was just the attention, but Kai was starting to realize that it was more than that.

He thought back to the moment in the hallway, when Lloyd had reached for him after he'd let go of his wrist, and felt a stab in his heart.

The kid just wanted basic physical affection. He didn't think he'd ever actually seen the kid be hugged. Any touch that happened was through scolding or moving him out of the way. Gods, no wonder he kept acting the way he did. Nya was right.

He remembered his panicked deer-in-headlights expression that had come onto his face when he'd realized that he had grabbed Kai's hand and inadvertently showed that he wanted the touch. Kai doubted Darkley's had encouraged physical affection, if they hadn't outright shunned it completely.

They'd managed to start showing Lloyd that being kind didn't make a person weak, but none of them had even considered any other aspects that Darkley's may have screwed over for the kid.

After a long while he ended up slipping out of bed and heading out into the hall, bare feet padding near-silently against the floor on his way to the main computer.

The ship's engine whirred in the silence as he typed in the password. Nya had left the file on the desktop like she'd been waiting for someone else to open it and he felt like a bit of an idiot for not doing this sooner.

There were a few items inside the file and he clicked the first one on the list.

Lloyd's Darkley's student file opened up, filling the screen and he took a deep breath before beginning to read through it, trying not to feel too much like he was looking into something that he shouldn't have been seeing.

A part of him had just always assumed that, since Lloyd had managed to get himself expelled from a school that was literally made for horrible people, he must have done something even more horrible to be kicked out. It was a stupid

assumption and he kinda felt like slamming his own head into the wall for thinking it up.

He had literally been expelled for ‘ *not being bad enough.* ’ The kid had gotten himself kicked out because he’d been *too good* . Kai almost wanted to laugh and the absurdity of the situation. It was no wonder Lloyd viewed any sort of vulnerability as a weakness. He’d been left out on his own the last time he’d attempted it.

He was really starting to hate Darkley’s.

He couldn’t help the small that twitched at the corner of his lips as he read through Lloyd’s list of “offences.” Helping up another student after he’d gotten knocked over, apologizing when he’d tripped someone, giving his blanket to a crying younger student… Even in a place like that they couldn’t get all of the good out of him.

Something swelled in his chest a little, and he felt kind of… proud of the kid. He huffed softly at himself, but his smile faded after a moment.

He’d really been an idiot, huh?

He read through a few more of the files before logging off and heading back towards the bedroom, something settling in his chest. Slipping back into bed, he stared deterimidly at the ceiling.

First of all, he was going to have to start paying Lloyd more attention outside of pranks and being annoyed with him. But that probably wasn’t going to be enough to change the way Lloyd acted after so long. He was going to have to do a little more than that and he tapped his fingers against the sheets, trying to think.

The most obvious course of action would be to stop reacting when Lloyd pulled a prank, but that was easier said than done. He grimaced. The kid knew exactly what buttons to push to get him annoyed. Ignoring him after and during the pranks was probably going to be a challenge, especially if Lloyd tried to increase the pranks when he didn’t get the reaction he wanted, but there wasn’t much else he could do.

Patience.

Kai sighed, rubbing his eyes, already feeling the stress building up behind his eyes. The next couple of weeks were probably going to be a living nightmare, but… Lloyd wasn’t a bad kid. He just… needed someone to show him that kindness and love weren’t weaknesses.

Kai hardly felt qualified to be that person, but, well, Nya had said Lloyd looked up to him, and he was the one that he pranked and followed around the most so he was probably the best selection, even if he didn’t feel like he was.

“So I guess we’re doing this,” he said to himself quietly. He looked up at the ceiling with a blink.

Attention, positive physical affection, and not strangling the kid when he dumped ants in his sock drawer. Sure. He could do that.

Then exhaled before offering a grin to the dark room.

“Wish me luck,” he said to the quiet night.

Everyone was already in the kitchen when he arrived, so he gave himself a moment in the hallway to take a deep inhale and exhale the air from his lungs slowly.

“Okay,” he said to himself. “Patience. We got this.” He squared his shoulders and walked into the kitchen.

Jay was already washing his dish, chatting with Nya as she pulled out a box of cereal from the cupboard. Cole was inhaling his bowl, sitting a seat away from Zane who was reading quietly on the end of the table. Lloyd was sitting on the opposite side of the table looking bleary-eyed and a little half-asleep as he munched on his cereal.

Kai forced himself to keep moving so he couldn’t chicken out.

Lloyd looked up as he approached, looking sleepy and his hair was a mess and Kai did the most natural thing when presented with such a situation.

He ruffled Lloyd’s hair with a huff that felt oddly genuine and greeted him with a, “Mornin’ gremlin,” before plopping into the seat next to him and grabbing the last remaining bowl and spoon that was set across the table in his usual spot.

He could literally hear the others staring at him and Lloyd had frozen and was straight up gaping at him with wide, suddenly very much awake eyes.

Kai resolutely ignored all of them, pulling his favourite cereal towards him, the same kind that Lloyd was eating, and, upon looking inside, he could see he had taken most of it. The day was already off to a great start. But it was just cereal, it wasn’t like it was the last box in existence. He poured the remains of the box into his bowl.

The crumbs were good anyways, and he was gonna need the extra sugar.

He glanced out of the corner of his eye after he finished pouring the milk to see Lloyd staring at his own bowl of cereal with furrowed brows, looking like he was thinking very hard about something.

Kai forced himself to turn his attention to his cereal, and the other’s finally seemed to take a hint and started moving around and talking again, though they all kept shooting him weird looks.

Which, fine, yeah, made sense they were confused, he didn’t exactly usually go out of his way to even look at Lloyd usually, let alone sit next to him and actually say hi in the mornings.

He felt a stab of guilt at that but pushed it aside and continued eating his cereal.

Showing some physical affection and sitting next to the kid? That was easy.

The hard part was when Lloyd dropped a bucket of mud--where did he even *get* a bucket of mud, they lived on a ship in the *sky* --on him when he walked out of the showers.

The mud felt all kinds of gross as it got into his previously clean clothing and hair and the bucket hit his head with a painful clang. The raging inferno lit and rose up to his throat, sharpened by the dull throbbing pain in his head and the snickers he could hear from closeby, before he aggressively stamped it down as far as he could and forced himself to exhale.

He could see Lloyd out of the corner of his eye, peeking out from around the corner a few feet away, not bothering to try and hide at all and looking pleased with himself and Kai forced his shoulders to relax and just sighed.

“Yeah, alright,” he sighed, brushing some mud out of his hair and then turning back to the showers.

He glimpsed Lloyd’s startled then confused, almost annoyed expression as he headed inside for his second shower of the morning.

He could tell it was going to be a long day.

After the fourth prank that morning, one that left Kai dripping in mud again--seriously, where was this kid getting this stuff?--Lloyd rushed forward as he turned to leave the room. “Kai! Wait!”

Kai turned to look at him questioningly and Lloyd stopped, blinking as though he genuinely hadn’t expected him to actually turn around. It kinda made Kai feel guilty again, but he brushed off the feeling and continued to look at him expectantly.

Lloyd stood skittishly, brows furrowed and looking up at him frustratedly. He opened and closed his mouth a few times, but nothing came out, like he wanted to say something but had no idea how to and he snapped his mouth shut, looking up at him with almost betrayed eyes.

It probably would have been kinda funny if Kai hadn’t felt guilty. It kinda felt like he was manipulating the kid, but he wasn’t sure how else to go about it, so he waited for another couple of seconds and when he didn’t answer he sighed.

“Look, I gotta go wash this off,” he said gesturing to the mud. He turned around waving loosely. “See you later, Lloyd.”

He didn’t glance back but could feel the way Lloyd stared after him.

The next day, Kai repeated it.

He greeted him in the morning by ruffling his hair and plopping down next to him for breakfast. There was more mud and other more increasingly creative things for pranks as the day progressed, and the team watched on in utter confusion as he didn’t react to any of them, no matter how elaborate they got. Lloyd’s face puffed up in frustration and he looked like he was on the verge of crying at the end of the day.

Kai felt bad but he couldn’t reward him for the pranks so he forced himself to breathe and continued on.

Day three Nya approached him for breakfast. “What are you up to?” she asked, leaning against the doorframe and folding her arms over her chest with a raised eyebrow.

Kai shrugged as he folded his laundry. “Nothing.” His reds were all looking suspiciously pink like someone had poured bleach into the washing machine.

His sister glanced pointedly down at the clothing but he refused to acknowledge it, continuing to calmly fold it like nothing was out of the ordinary.

The pranks got increasingly more elaborate and attention grabbing as the week went on. Kai had to hand it to this kid, his planning skills were actually kind of impressive. He had quite the imagination.

“You okay dude?” Cole asked him, almost warily, like he expected him to suddenly start screaming when he walked out of the kitchen, drenched in soapy dishwater.

“Yeah, I’m good,” Kai shrugged, knowing Lloyd was watching from down the hall.

Cole just looked at him, seeming a little unnerved but accepted his answer and continued down the hall, looking back at him every couple of steps.

Kai collapsed into bed sore from training, and buckets, and slipping and falling over, and didn’t even freak out at *all* when he rolled over and saw a frog on his pillow next to him.

He wasn’t a huge fan of frogs so his honest lack of reaction was probably a testament to how tired he was. He just blinked slowly at the frog, really not having the energy to deal with it. Who knew *not* getting mad would be so exhausting.

“Just stay on your side of the pillow and we won’t have any problems,” he told it tiredly before rolling over and promptly falling asleep.

By the start of the new week, Kai was getting tired of being pummeled and low-key would have liked nothing more than to lock Lloyd in the bathroom just so he could actually breathe for five minutes without stepping on something or having something dumped on him, but he’d signed up for this. These things took time, right? He just had to keep at it, no matter how much he just wanted to lay down on the floor and admit defeat.

He could be wrong about the whole Lloyd wanting attention and possibly being touch starved, and there was the possibility that Lloyd would just end up giving up on him and targeting someone else, which, he supposed, wouldn’t have been too bad an ending to all of this, but he still would have preferred actually helping him rather than just getting rid of him.

Which was kinda weird since literally a week ago he would have given up video games if it meant the kid leaving him

alone.

One prank sent him stumbling through an open door and falling down a set of stairs, which actually really hurt, but he knew it hadn't been part of Lloyd's plan because the kid had rushed forward with a panicked, horrified look on his face, apologies tumbling out of his mouth the instant he'd landed at the bottom.

He looked guilty but still stood within arms reach, a stubborn look on his face, like it had been an accident but he was going to take advantage of it anyways, because Kai had to be mad after that right?

Kai just sighed, sitting up and rubbing his head, ignoring the aches in his limbs that told him bruises were probably imminent. It was fine. Whether or not he was right about anything, he really did need to stop getting mad at him. So at the very least he was gonna learn something from it. The thought made him huff a humourless laugh.

"It's fine," he told Lloyd after the fifteenth apology from the kid, deciding to just stay sitting cross legged on the floor for a minute. There really wasn't any rush to get up and he wasn't keen on moving too much yet. He really hoped he hadn't ended up with a concussion.

He looked up at him to find Lloyd *staring* .

"Why aren't you mad?" he yelled at him suddenly, making him startle.

"What?" Kai asked automatically.

"You're supposed to be mad!" Lloyd yelled, stomping his foot and clenching his fists tightly. He looked down at the ground, tears in his eyes.

"Do you want me to be mad?" Kai asked him cautiously and quietly, unsure about how to navigate the new waters that he'd suddenly been plunged into.

"Yes!" Lloyd yelled, then "no! I-" his shoulders shook. "I--I just want--I want--" he made a frustrated sound.

"You know," Kai said carefully. "If you want something, you can just ask for it."

Lloyd stared at him.

Kai stared right back.

He swallowed, looking very much like he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't have, and abruptly looked away, crossing his arms with a scowl.

"Whatever," he grumbled darkly under his breath before whirling around and marching away.

Kai watched him go then laid down in the hallway, starfished across the wooden floor and stared at the ceiling for a while.

The next morning Lloyd was quiet enough that the team was exchanging looks and they glanced at Kai, who pointedly ignored them and plopped down in the seat next to the kid.

He could read the room and decided to forgo the hair ruffle. He didn't look like he'd welcome it right at that moment.

Lloyd just stared down at his toast.

After he'd gotten his toast and practically spread half the jar of jam onto the surface he took a bite and glanced at Lloyd who was still staring steadfastly at his untouched food.

He swallowed his mouthful and chewed on the inside of his lip, mulling it over for a moment before he let their legs bump together deliberately.

Lloyd's eyes darted to him for a moment before he snapped them back to his toast, fingers giving a twitch and he curled them into fists and folded his arms stubbornly.

Kai turned his own eyes to his toast but his focus was still on the boy next to him.

After a few minutes Lloyd finally reached out and picked up his toast, nibbling on it a little.

The action made Kai relax for some reason.

There were no pranks that day, which was honestly really really strange. He'd gotten so used to them that the ship seemed impossibly quiet without Lloyd's snickers.

No pranks the next day either, so Kai dared to think that maybe Lloyd was starting to understand. The incident with the stairs really seemed to have bothered him. Lloyd was a good kid. Most of his pranks, even back before with the serpentine, hadn't been really harmful. He didn't want to hurt anyone and it seemed he really felt guilty about his prank having caused someone to actually get hurt.

Honestly, Kai was just glad that it had been stairs and not the side of the ship.

In any case, it seemed Lloyd felt guilty enough that he wasn't going to be trying any new pranks any time soon.

His work was still far from done though. Now that Lloyd knew he wasn't going to get a reaction from him that way, Kai needed to convince him that he could just *talk* to him and ask for things and that it was okay and that he would actually listen and not ignore him.

He had his work cut out for him, but he needed to finish this. Now would be a really bad time to leave Lloyd hanging.

Kai continued greeting him in the mornings. Lloyd wouldn't really meet his eyes but would mumble a hello back and didn't try to swat his hand away or tense up during the hair ruffles, so Kai continued on with the routine.

They were on dishes together that evening and Lloyd dried without complaint, eyes fastened resolutely to the dishes he was drying off and away from Kai, though he could feel him glance at him every once in a while when he wasn't looking. They'd brought a stool into the kitchen so that he could actually reach the counter, his head reached Kai's shoulder with it's help.

Kai took their close proximity as an opportunity to bump into him when he reached for new dishes.

Lloyd finally looked up at him, mouth open like he was going to ask something but then he clamped it shut and went back to drying, a furrow in his brown and a small frown on his face.

The look gradually eased away after a few more bumps and an accidental well placed spoon under the tap that ended up spraying water over the both of them and making Kai shriek and Lloyd laugh so hard he nearly fell off the stool. The smile stayed throughout the rest of the dishes and Kai was starting to feel like they'd actually made some progress.

He decided to risk increasing the physical contact after that, and extended the hair ruffles to whenever they passed in the hallway.

The first time he did so Lloyd tensed and for a horrible moment, Kai really thought he'd really screwed up. But then he was leaning into the touch with a soft exhale and Kai's panic died.

Lloyd looked up at him from under his hand and gave him a small hesitating smile.

Kai swore his heart literally found a skateboard and did a kickflip in his chest. He couldn't stop the full fledged beaming grin that came onto his own face and he ruffled his hair again.

The next time that Kai was doing the dishes, Lloyd practically bounced forward and volunteered to help. And the next time Lloyd was in charge of clearing the table after supper, Kai turned down his friend's invitation to play video games and helped him in the kitchen. That really increased the weird looks but Lloyd's ecstatic beam was more than worth it.

Nya just smiled at him knowingly, and Kai wasn't sure if he wanted to make a face at her or smile back. He settled for something in-between that probably made him look constipated if her laugh was anything to go by.

Things went really well for a while until Kai started to realize that Lloyd still wouldn't come find him outside of cleaning. It was like he'd exchanged pranks for helping with chores, and while Kai was always grateful for the help and things were a lot more fun with Lloyd there, he really didn't want the kid thinking he had to be *doing* something in order for him to pay attention to him.

Lloyd was a kid, he didn't need to earn affection from him and Kai really needed to figure out how to show him that so he understood.

Trying to be more observant to his wants was a good start.

It was tough, since the kid was good at hiding it, but he eventually saw his opening when they were leaving the comic store.

Lloyd glanced at Cole for a moment, his steps faltering, almost stopping at the door before he glanced at Kai, who pretended not to be looking at him, and then frowned a little before shaking his head and continuing to follow them without complaint.

Kai took the opening for what it was and swooped in, scooping Lloyd off the ground, making him give a surprised yelp, flailing slightly and he maneuvered him until Lloyd grabbed onto his shoulders and clung to him, legs coming to wrap around his waist and then he was clinging to his back like a koala.

Kai then proceeded to walk like nothing had happened, going back to talking to Nya who acted as nonchalant about it as he did, and they both resolutely ignored the stares from the other three.

It took a moment for Lloyd to relax, but he did, shifting a little to get more comfortable and pressing his face into the back of Kai's shoulder hiding his face. Kai was a little concerned for a second but Nya caught his attention.

He's smiling , she mouthed at him silently, accentuating her words by gesturing to her mouth with her fingers lifting them in time with the corners of her mouth giving an exaggerated smile.

An elated feeling expanded in his chest and he didn't even think to fight the excited smile that came onto his face. Nya laughed at him but that did nothing to dampen his good mood.

He walked to the ship with Lloyd on his back, a smile on his face, and a bounce in his step.

Lloyd hopped into the seat next to Kai at breakfast and promptly stole one of his pop tarts. Kai just laughed and leaned into him, bumping their shoulders together, and shaking his head before going back to his remaining pop tart.

He looked up, pausing his munching when he noticed Cole staring at him like he'd grown a second head.

"What?" he asked, voice muffled through his mouthful.

A grin stretched across Cole's face, and he shrugged. "Nothing," he said, grin not dampening in the slightest. He scooped up his dish and stood up to place it next to the sink, humming under his breath.

Kai looked at Lloyd and shrugged. Lloyd hid a snicker behind his pop tart.

The next morning Kai walked inside the kitchen to find Cole showing Lloyd how to make waffles. Or rather, Cole and Lloyd were painting the ceiling with waffle batter, and flour was coating every surface of the kitchen.

Kai gaped at the war-zone that surrounded him. There was flour in places that couldn't have possibly have gotten there by accident, there was just no way. It was even under the table and on top of the fridge.

"Kai!" Lloyd exclaimed with a bright grin, when he spotted him looking around at the cooking carnage that surrounded them. He had flour streaks stuck to his hair and waffle batter in his hair and on his clothes. He hopped off the stool that was next to Cole and rushed over to him, grabbing his hand and pulling him forward. "Cole's teaching me to make waffles! We're about to make the whipped cream! Come on!"

"Waffles?" Kai spluttered, letting himself be dragged over to the counter. "This isn't waffle making, this is kitchen vandalization!"

Lloyd laughed and Cole grinned at him, a smear of butter on his cheek and so much flour in his hair it was nearly white--there was probably more flour in his hair than there was in the waffles. "Hey, at least we haven't burned anything yet!"

Kai paused, then blinked. "You make a good point. That's actually really impressive."

Cole flicked powdered sugar at his face and Kai squawked, dodging it, but some still ended up in his hair.

"Oh, this is a disaster," said Zane pleasantly, as he entered, drawing their attention. "Is Cole baking today?"

Kai snorted, cracking up at the sight of Cole's offended expression.

"I'm not *that* bad," he grumbled disgruntledly, turning back to open the waffle iron and retrieve the almost-certainly fully cooked waffles.

"Sure," Kai said with an amused smirk. "Tell that to the kitchen."

“How did the batter end up on the ceiling,” Zane asked, looking genuinely bewildered.

“Cole dropped the bowl,” Lloyd told him excitedly as he climbed back onto his stool.

“How--?” Kai started but Lloyd wasn’t finished.

“Then he tried to catch it, but he hit it instead.”

Kai snorted, almost choking on air and Cole huffed, only making him laugh harder.

“It hit the ceiling, but then I caught it,” Lloyd continued, with a proud grin.

“No kidding,” Kai said, a matching grin spreading across his face. “That must’ve been some catch.”

Cole snorted. “He forgot to mention he caught it upside down. With his head.”

“Is that why there’s all that batter in your hair?” Kai wheezed.

Lloyd scowled and shot back. “At least I didn’t make an egg explode.”

Cole flicked flour at him and Lloyd stuck his tongue out.

Kai cackled.

Kai felt like he was getting a little better at reading the kid. When he peeked into the training room while Kai was sparring, he’d call for a break and walk over to him, greeting him with a hair ruffle and a smile. The acknowledgement was sometimes all Lloyd seemed to need, as though he’d just been checking to see if anything had changed. Kai’s heart swelled a little every time he left with a smile.

It started to just become a habit to scoop Lloyd up or have him climb onto his back whenever they left the comic book shop, or grocery store. He sat next to him during breakfast and they’d steal each other’s food, and afterwards do the dishes side by side. Sometimes Lloyd ended up leaning into him and Kai would pretend to fall over to make him laugh.

Lloyd started actively seeking him out just to hang out with. Sometimes he’d sit and watch him train, and other times Kai would invite him over to teach him a couple of moves. It was a good excuse to be able bestow more hair ruffles on him and praise every time he got something right. Lloyd would grin at him, looking pleased with himself, and Kai would grin right back.

It was good. At this point Kai could hardly remember what it was like to actually be mad at Lloyd. There was so much about the kid that was easy to love, he couldn’t imagine thinking of him like he had mere months before.

“Hey, Nya,” Kai pulled his sister aside for a moment after a mission. She looked at him questioningly as he hesitated.

“Thanks,” he said. “For… y’know.”

Her face softened, and she smiled nudging his arm. “No problem, bro. I’m glad you’re looking after him.”

“He’s a good kid,” he told her.

“You’re a good big brother, Kai,” she said softly.

“And you’re a good little sister,” he said back with a smile.

She huffed and pulled him into a hug, which he returned without any hesitation, laughing softly.

“I mean it,” she said, her voice muffled. “Not just to me, but to Lloyd too.”

Kai faltered a little at her words, having never thought about it in that way. But… oddly enough, thinking of Lloyd as his little brother just… fit. He couldn’t imagine not loving him just as much as he did Nya and he was going to be forever grateful that she’d talked to him and shown him that there was more to the kid than he’d initially thought. He huffed another laugh, feeling a little choked up.

“You both deserve a good big brother,” he whispered.

“And you got us one,” she whispered right back. He laughed since words weren’t coming and just hugged his little sister tighter.

Kai flopped down on the ground at the foot of the couch amidst the extra pillows and blankets that they had pulled out just for movie night. Nya sat behind him and he leaned back against her legs. Zane sat next to her on the couch, and then Cole next to him. Jay took the seat on the floor leaning back against Cole’s legs a few feet away from Kai.

They were talking and arguing about what movie they wanted to pick and Kai found himself craning his neck looking for Lloyd.

He spotted him easily from where he was standing a few feet away, chewing on his bottom lip and looking at them all hesitatingly.

Kai waited till he caught his eye and then gave him a smile and patted the open space on the floor next to him. Lloyd’s face lit up and he wasted no time in scrambling over and plopping himself down right next to him, close enough that they were almost pressed together.

Kai adjusted himself to get more comfortable and ended up throwing his arm around Lloyd’s shoulders and pulling him closer. Lloyd squeaked a little, flailing under his arm, but settled after a moment of wiggling to get comfortable. He relaxed against Kai with a contented sigh, eyes closing and a small happy smile on his face.

“Hey,” Kai said, prodding his shoulder with a finger, his voice coloured with amusement. “Are you falling asleep?”

“No,” Lloyd said, swatting at his hand without opening his eyes.

“You sure?” Kai grinned. “You look pretty sleepy to me.”

Lloyd stuck his tongue out at him and Kai laughed.

Despite his claims, Lloyd was asleep within the first ten minutes of the movie, his face squished against Kai’s chest, completely dead to the world.

Kai smiled down at him fondly, but didn’t bother moving, other than to pull a blanket over both of them to keep the younger boy warm.

Kai woke up randomly sometimes.

He wasn't sure what caused it, or why it happened, but it was just something he had to deal with now and again. Could've been his restlessness at going so long without a real fight, or maybe his elemental power feeling antsy. Whatever the case was, Kai found himself blinking up at the ceiling, at what he knew couldn't have been a reasonable time.

He resisted the urge to sigh and just rubbed his eyes tiredly.

A sniffling sound caught his attention and he froze, ears straining in the quiet humming early morning.

He turned his head to the side and his eyes fell on a huddled small shape sitting on the floor at the end of his bed.

Any sleep that still clung to him was gone in an instant and he pushed himself off the bed, sitting up to better see Lloyd where he sat wringing his hands and occasionally rubbing at his eyes like he was crying.

"Lloyd?" he said, bewildered and concerned.

Lloyd started at the sound of his voice, head jerking around to look at him with wide eyes.

They stared at each other.

Lloyd's shoulders were tensed and hunched and he looked very small.

"Is… everything okay?" Kai asked haltingly, unsure of how to progress.

Lloyd finally turned his head away, wiping harshly at his eyes.

"I'm fine," he said, his voice muffled when he buried his face in his arms. His voice grew smaller with a slight tremor. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you up."

"You didn't wake me," Kai told him without really knowing if it were true or not.

Lloyd didn't respond, and Kai watched him for a moment.

"You wanna… um…" he rubbed a hand over his face, inhaling.

Lloyd didn't look at him and he sighed.

"Get up here," he said, patting the bed firmly.

Lloyd's head shot up and he looked at him with wide eyes.

"Come on," Kai coaxed him with an encouraging smile.

He only stared at him a moment more before he was scrambling to his feet, tripping over himself in his haste, as though he was afraid Kai might change his mind, falling onto the bed as Kai scooched over to make room. He burrowed

under the covers, completely then poked his head out over the top of them to rest it on the pillow. He wiggled for a moment to get comfortable, then relaxed with a sigh and looked at Kai, almost expectantly.

"You wanna talk about it?" he asked him quietly.

Apparently it wasn't what Lloyd wanted to hear because he was scowling. "No."

"Okay," Kai said. "That's cool. Fine with me." He closed his eyes and let himself breathe for a few minutes.

The kid was pretty cold and Kai wondered how long he'd been sitting there.

Finally Lloyd broke the silence.

"I had a bad dream," he confessed into the stillness in an unsteady whisper, as though he expected Kai to tell him it was a bad thing.

Kai slung an arm over him supportively without opening his eyes. "That's okay. We all get nightmares."

"Even you?"

Kai huffed a laugh at that. "Yeah, little bro," he said softly. "Even me."

Lloyd was silent for long enough that Kai thought he'd fallen asleep and he'd started dozing himself.

"You called me little brother," Lloyd said, his voice quiet.

Kai blinked away the sleep from his eyes and looked at him through the darkness.

"Yeah," he said, surprised. "I guess I did."

Lloyd picked at the sheets a little. "I…" he swallowed. "You make a good big brother," he finally said.

"Yeah?" Kai asked, feeling a little breathless. Lloyd nodded and he exhaled. "I'm glad."

Lloyd scooted forward and snuggled closer, hugging him and Kai let his arms wrap around his small form as well. He let his head rest on top of Lloyds and his hair tickled his nose.

"Do I make a good brother?" Lloyd asked in a quiet whisper, his voice small.

Kai smiled into his hair. "The best."

He made a happy sound and settled.

It didn't take him long to fall asleep after that. His small body gradually got warmer in Kai's arms and the increasingly familiar feeling of love swelled in his chest until he was blinking back tears at the overwhelming feeling.

He swallowed unsteadily and pressed his face against Lloyd's head until he could breathe again.

In the quiet of the night Kai decided that he was never going to let anything happen to him. No matter what the future held, he was going to make sure Lloyd got the love and care and support that he deserved.

With that promise solidifying firmly in his mind, he fell asleep.

Kai gave a light knock on the door as a warning and then pushed the door open, entering the room.

Lloyd looked up from where he sat hunched over on the edge of his bed for a moment before dropping his eyes again. He was fiddling with his fingers, elbows resting on his knees and feet planted on the floor, looking horribly out of place in the familiar bedroom.

Kai was still having a hard time matching the person in front of him as the same kid who stole his pancakes and climbed into his bed when he had a nightmare. There were similarities of course, but it was hard not to find it strange.

"Hey," Kai greeted as he flopped down next to him.

"Hi," Lloyd said back, and it was such a strange voice. He wondered if he was feeling as off-kilter as the rest of them were. He figured he would be, since he was the one who was suddenly thrown into a five or six year older version of himself.

Lloyd's hand came up to grip his arm, rubbing as though to comfort himself, or maybe get used to the new length of it.

"How you holding up?" Kai asked softly.

"Fine," came Lloyd's reply, but he still wasn't looking at him.

"A dangerous word to use, Lloyd Garmadon," Kai teased.

Lloyd huffed a little laugh, the sound unfamiliar but somehow he could still hear a little bit of the young boy in his voice. It died quickly, though, along with the brief smile and he continued to stare at the ground, lips pressed together and his brow's creased, looking almost… nervous. He rubbed his arm again and Kai knew him well enough to know there was something bothering him.

He gave a long dramatic sigh to get his attention, before turning to him, crossing his legs on the bed, and pinning him in a look. "What's wrong?" he asked, tone leaving no room for argument.

Lloyd started a little, looking at him and blinked a few times. "I--nothing," then he stopped and sighed, running his hand through his hair and hunching over a little more. "Nothing's wrong, I just…" his hand went back to gripping his arm, and he forced out a frustrated exhale.

Kai watched him wordlessly.

Lloyd looked up at him with a slight grimace. "You don't find this weird?"

Kai barked out a laugh, startling him again. "Oh, no," he said, laughing again, "it's very weird. Weird as heck. But it would probably be weirder if it *wasn't* weird."

Lloyd huffed another laugh, a small, almost pained, smile coming onto his face. "Yeah," he agreed, looking back to the floor, his voice dropping into something more quiet. "That's fair."

Kai looked at him closely. He watched his fingers tap against his arm and his jaw move slightly as he chewed on the inside of his mouth. The movements were so familiar and so *Lloyd* that Kai had to smile.

"Hey," he said softly, gaining his attention. Lloyd looked up at him, and Kai gave him a reassuring smile. "You're still you, kid."

Lloyd stared at him, but there was a flicker in his expression that told Kai that he'd hit home.

He huffed, stretching his arms out a little and then reached over to ruffle his hair. "Bigger body or no, you'll always be my little bro."

Lloyd stared at him for a moment more, eyes wide, and Kai kept his hand lingering in his hair, in what he hoped was still comforting and not demeaning, and gave him a small smile.

Lloyd gave a shuddering exhale without taking his eyes off of Kai, his shoulders releasing some of their tension, and he gave him a wobbly relieved smile. "That's… good to know. Yeah." He dropped his eyes to look at the sheets on the bed. "Thanks, Kai."

"Anytime, gremlin," Kai grinned at him, withdrawing his hand so he could bump their shoulders together.

Lloyd huffed a laugh, a real smile coming onto his face at the familiar motion, and he let Kai lean into him and push him before he leaned right back, swaying slightly once the pressure was released.

He was still leaning towards him, almost subconsciously, so Kai threw an arm over his shoulder and pulled him into a side hug. Lloyd only hesitated for a moment before he was pressing his face into Kai's shoulder and his hands were coming around to wrap around him and grip the fabric of his shirt.

"And hey," Kai felt the sudden need to add. "This doesn't change anything, okay?" He gripped him a little tighter. "Hugs aren't off the table just cause you're suddenly older. And my door is always open if you can't sleep."

Lloyd's next laugh was a little choked, and his body trembled lightly. "Yeah," he whispered. "Okay."

"And I'm never gonna say no to help with the dishes," Kai added.

"Okay, Kai."

"And I guess you can keep stealing my poptarts."

"Sounds great," he could hear the smile in his choked voice.

"And I am absolutely strong enough to carry you still, even if you're bigger now, so if you want a piggy-back-ride to the ship after grocery shopping, I'm not gonna say no--"

Lloyd was laughing fully now, his shoulders shaking and face pressed against Kai's shoulder to muffle his laughter.

Kai grinned at him.

"I'll think about it," Lloyd said with a grin up at him when he'd finally stopped laughing.

Kai's smile softened again. "But seriously, Lloyd. Anything you need. It'll take more than some tomorrow's tea and shiny hair to scare me off. I'm here for you, bro."

Lloyd watched him for a moment, as if searching for something. Whatever it was, he seemed to find it and his mouth twitched into a crooked smile. "Thanks, Kai." His voice softened. "For everything."

Kai swallowed down the emotion that was lodged in his throat before responding. “Anytime, Lloyd.” He ruffled his hair again, for good measure and Lloyd just laughed.

Maybe it wasn’t so hard to mash the two together.

Like he said, older or no, it was still Lloyd, his little brother.

And no matter how much he grew and changed, Kai was always going to love him.

“Come on,” he said, nudging him as he released him from the hug. “Let’s go raid the fridge. I think Zane left some brownies in there.” He stood up from the bed and offered Lloyd a hand.

“Aren’t those Jay’s?” Lloyd asked, raising an eyebrow and letting him help him to his feet.

“Only in the loosest sense,” Kai smirked, slinging an arm over his shoulders and steering him to the door. “I’m sure he won’t mind.”

He absolutely did mind, and Lloyd totally ditched him to take the blame for it, running out of the kitchen like his socks were on fire. Kai shouted after him in betrayal. He ended up promising to wash the dishes and help Zane make a new batch of brownies for Jay.

He didn’t mind though.

Lloyd’s laugh, and the way he relaxed afterwards, was worth it.

Notes:

yEET. THAT WAS LONG. Impressive you managed to read through it all >:P

This is a bit of a chaotic mess, but it was so much fun to write so, here it is and I hope you enjoyed :)!

DROP ME A COMMENT IF YOU FEEL SO INCLINED *throws star themed cupcake decorations at you*

Close (#)